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THE

SELF-EMPLOYMENT
IN SECRET.

LEFT IN THE HAND-WRITING OF
REV. JOHN CORBET.

WITH A PREFACE
BY JOHN HOWE.

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THE PREFACE.

THE character of this holy servant of Christ, is already given by an every way suitable hand,* in what part it lay open to the observation of others. His more interior portraiture, which is contained in these

* In his funeral sermon by Mr. Baxter.

papers, was (as it could only be) drawn by himself.

Why it is now exposed to public view, there is no need to be scrupulously careful in giving an account. It must be acknowledged, there is usually with the holiest men, a modest shyness of communicating these privacies of their own souls. Their inner man doth show its own face with the more difficulty, by how much it is more beautiful, and worthy to be beheld. And so it was with this excellent

THE PREFACE.

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person, as his inscriptions upon these papers show ; “ The State of my own Soul,” and “ Notes for myself ;” signifying their intended use was that of a mirror to represent himself to his own eye, not to other men’s.

Yet this aversion, though great, hath not been always invincible, or such as no reasons to the contrary could over-sway. What are the Psalms of David, and sundry memoirs of holy men in scripture, that were remotest from ostentation

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and vain-glory, but records of the most secret dispositions and motions of the hidden man of the heart, made public for the instruction of their own and succeeding ages. As also, the other published meditations and soliloquies of some of the greatest worthies in the christian church, must be understood to have had the same pious design. Nor hath a generous benignity, in some heathens, permitted them to engross all to themselves, or to envy the world those

pleasant sensations of their own minds which they thought might be some way instructive and useful to other men. As that renowned philosopher and emperor * is an instance, who scrupled not to write, and leave behind him for this purpose, twelve books concerning his own life.

The thing cannot be culpable, if the design be innocent, which will in great part be discernible in the manner of doing it, when it is with unaffected simplicity, and without studied

* Marcus Antoninus.

disguise : as we commend a picture, not so much for its being specious, as that it is like the face. So have good men in giving accounts of themselves, not spared to put in the distempers and disaffections of their spirits, that are as great blemishes and deformities, as a wart or mole on the face ; which the faithful pencil must as curiously express, as the greatest decencies.

However, if this publication be praise-worthy, nothing is to be arrogated to the author, as, if it be

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thought blamable, nothing is to be derogated. For though the work itself (which carries its sufficient praise with it) be owing entirely to him, or rather to the grace of God in him, the making it public is from the advice and desire of some friends, willing to impart what was once most private, for a public good.

It is but the dissection of his soul, less to be regretted by friends, when he is now out of sight, and much more useful, than that of his lately pained body.

And as anatomy discovers all the curious contexture of our bodily fabric, here are vivid representations of faith, love, a heavenly mind, of humility, meekness, self-denial, entire resignedness to the will of God, in their first and continued motions; with whatever parts and principles besides compose the whole frame of the new creature: as if we could perceive with our eyes, how the blood in a human body circulates through all the veins and arteries, how the heart beats, the spirits fly

to and fro ; and how each nerve, tendon, fibre, and muscle, perform its several operations. Here it may be seen, how a heart touched from above, works and tends thitherward, how it depresses itself in humiliation, dilates itself in love, exalts itself in praise, submits itself under chastenings ; how it draws in its refreshings and succours, as there is need.

To many, who have seen so steady, uniform, and amiable a course and tenour of life, how grateful is it to behold the secret motions of those

inward latent principles, from whence all proceeded ! Though some others would look no further than the advantages in external respects that accrue by it. As though some content themselves to know by a clock the hour of the day, or partake the beneficial use of some rarer engine ; the more curious, especially any that design imitation, and to compose some like thing, would be much gratified, if through some pellucid enclosure, they could behold all the inward work, and observe how every

wheel, spring, or movement, perform their several parts and offices towards that common use.

What is here presented, as it may be of great usefulness to all that seriously design the christian life ; so it hath a special use for such as design it not, and who think there is no such thing.

It may peculiarly serve to convince such as are willing to think as ill as they can of the calling and office of the ministry, that there are some who serve the Lord in that

work, who do not study such subjects as are here exemplified, only to frame discourses of them, wherewith to entertain the people for an hour; but for their own use and practice too: who live the things which they teach; and eat of the food they prepare for others: who are in good earnest, and most intent to save themselves, and those who hear them: and do really venture their own souls upon the same bottom, upon which they would persuade their hearers to venture theirs;

taking all possible care, lest, when they preach to others, they should themselves be castaways.

The very opinion, that we preach only for forms' sake, and to keep up the custom, and believe or regard not what we ourselves say, as well as the thing itself, is no small, nor perhaps uncommon hinderance to the success of preaching at this day. It is hard to be serious in hearing, what I think he is not serious in himself who preaches it. If I apprehend he trifles, it is a great

temptation to me to do so too. You may see, this worthy man considered the gospel as a gospel of salvation, and not only taught, but used it accordingly. How solicitous was he to ground substantially, and strongly, his hope of eternal life ! How warily did he feel his way ; and labour to understand, and know practically upon what terms he might safely appear before his Judge !

To those who do not so, this ought to be taken for a reprehensive

example, and may be very directive to those who do.

That it may attain its proper ends, is the serious prayer of

One desirous to promote
the common salvation,

JOHN HOWE.

INTRODUCTION.

IN order to peace of conscience and assurance of my good estate towards God, it must in reason be supposed, that I may rightly understand the marks of sincerity set down in God's word, as also the predominant inclination and motions of my own soul; and that I may be so far assured of my right understanding of the things

aforesaid, as to have no reasonable ground of doubting thereof. For I have no other ordinary way to know my sincerity in order to the said peace and assurance, but to examine it according to my best understanding by the marks thereof set down in God's word. In this self-examination it is requisite that I use all diligence and impartiality with constancy; and that I earnestly pray for God's assistance in it, and heartily offer myself to his search, as David did, Psa. cxxxix. 23. Wherefore, if upon the

most impartial and diligent search that I can make, according to the best of my understanding, together with earnest and constant prayer to God to assist me therein, as in my greatest concern; it doth most rationally appear to me, that the predominant inclination and motions of my soul are agreeable to the marks of sincerity set down in God's word, then my conscience, doing its office aright, is to judge for me accordingly, namely, that I am sincere. And in this judgment I am to acquiesce,

because it is the judgment of God's agent and minister, which he hath set up within me to judge under him of my internal state, according to his law, by which he himself doth and will judge me. God hath the same aspect upon the soul, which conscience his vicegerent hath, as it from time to time, or ordinarily judgeth not against him or without him, but under him and according to his judgment, either acquitting or condemning. To this purpose the apostle speaketh, "If our

heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God," 1 Johniii. 20, 21.

THE STATE OF MY OWN SOUL,

ACCORDING TO THE STRICTEST SEARCH
THAT I CAN MAKE

*Search me, O God, and know my heart :
try me, and know my thoughts : and see
if there be any wicked way in me, and
lead me in the way everlasting. Amen.
Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24.*

THE FOLLOWING PARTICULARS WERE
SET DOWN IN DEC. JAN. FEB.
A. D. 1663.

As far as I am able to discern my
heart and ways, I have chosen the
Lord for my portion ; I take up my
rest in Him, and not in the creature.

To love and fear and admire and bless him, and to have communion with him, is my chief joy. And the eternal vision and fruition of God is my great hope. I would not only have God hereafter, but here in this world for my chief good. He is even now better than all the world.

I come to God by Jesus Christ. And as I believe in God, I believe also in Christ, and rejoice and glory in him ; and acknowledging my own sinfulness and unworthiness, I rest entirely on him as the ground of my

justification to life, and of all favour and acceptance with God.

I receive Christ as my Lord, and give up myself to him. I let him into my heart by faith. I esteem him precious, and am willing to suffer the loss of all, that I may win him; I desire to know him in the power of his death and resurrection, and am much grieved, that I do so weakly experience that power, and feel it no more operative in me in my dying to sin and the world, and in living and walking in the Spirit.

I do not cease to lament the more heinous sins of my life, and cannot forbear the continual imploring of their pardon. I do not return again to them, and I resolve never so to do; I watch and pray, and strive against all sin, and especially against those sins to which I am more especially inclined; my conflicts are daily, and I am put hard to it. But I do not yield up myself to any sin, nor lie down in it, yea, I do not suffer sinful cogitations to lodge in me. Howbeit I am many times much

discomposed, damped in spirit, deadened in duty, distracted in my studies, and molested and hindered every way by the sin that dwelleth in me. But I resolve, that sin shall have no rest in my soul, and that I will never enjoy it. Though I cannot keep sin out of my heart, yet it doth not reign in my mortal body, nor do I yield my members to the service of it.

I would fulfil all righteousness, and owe nothing to any man but love. I had a hundred-fold rather suffer wrong than do wrong.

It was said of Christ, that no guile was found in his mouth; and of the faithful company that followed the Lamb, that no guile was found in their mouth. And that it may be so with me I endeavour with my whole heart.

I trust God with my chief outward concernment, even with that about which I am most solicitous, and wherein to be satisfied is of great moment to me, for that it hath as great an influence upon my spirit as any outward thing hath. And

I do believe that God will provide for me herein, or otherwise supply the want of it. My earnest desire of God is, that my outward condition may be so fixed by his wise and gracious providence, as that I may be least exposed to temptation, and best disposed, and furthered unto duty.

I have an inclination to seek self, particularly in vain applause, and that in religious services ; and herein I have been highly guilty ; but I abase myself for it before God, and

I am willing to be satisfied in the praise that comes from him alone ; and I trust, through his grace, that I can deny myself in matter of reputation to do his will.

I love the Lord Jesus Christ, and all his saints. The broken estate of the church, especially by intestine evils, is a great trouble to my spirit. The scandals of professors I am truly grieved at, and I would not by their weaknesses seek to excuse my own faults, or to advance my own virtues.

I have no settled bitterness and revenge against my enemies, but I love, pity, and pray for them. As concerning God's enemies I am more provoked, but I would not be inhuman or cruel against them. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

I condemn none, I would not im-bitter the spirit of any. I would answer all obligations of courtesy, as accounting it a duty. I would not insult over the weakness of any ; and this is partly out of natural

tenderness and moral considerations; and I find, that the goodness and kindness of God, the meekness, gentleness of Christ, hath hereunto made impression upon me.

I find upon the review of my life past, according to the clearest judgment that I can make, that I have not gone backward, but proceeded forward, in the ways of godliness. And this increase I reckon not by sudden fits now and then happening, but by the main progress of the work in the total sum.

I have been grieved that I am no more elevated in the hope of heaven, and that I cannot attain to a longing desire to be gone hence, and to be there with Christ. I have laboured to raise up my heart, and have had enlargement, even when deadness and flatness had been upon me. I think with myself sometimes, were my evidences clear for heaven, I should exult to be gone hence this very hour; but I find not this readiness at all times.

When I have had a good enter

prise in hand for God's glory and some public benefit, I watched against vanity of mind, and vain-glory in carrying it on; and I desire purely to aim at God's glory, and to be satisfied with my reward in him. And I take heed, that I forget not my mortality, when I am pursuing that design; but I would fain bring up myself to this frame, to be contented to be taken hence in the midst of it, as judging that I shall be no loser by my removal, and God cannot stand in need of that service.

Lord, forgive my inordinate self-love, which hath disturbed the actings of pure charity in divers passages of moment. For self-love in my sensitive appetite hath had motions contrary to the love of God and my neighbour. Nevertheless my judgment hath disallowed it, and I have for the most part acted against it, and for that, which the love of God and my neighbour did command.

O Lord, forgive the ten thousand talents I owe thee. I come to Jesus

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Christ, who hath made satisfaction,
and lay this heavy reckoning to his
account. Lord, forgive my iniquity,
for it is exceedingly great.

THESE FOLLOWING PASSAGES WERE SET
DOWN MARCH 4, A. D. 1675.

Upon the review of the foregoing
evidences, after twelve years, I find
through grace the same abiding in
me, and more and more rooted.
And some particulars which did

make me more to doubt of my good estate, I find to be since that time in a greater degree vanquished.

I have done what in me lies, to call to remembrance all my remarkable sins, from my childhood and youth till now : and as far as I can judge, I have repented of them, both generally and particularly. And I now repent of them all, from the bottom of my heart, with a self-abhorrence, if I can know my own heart by the strictest and most impartial search that I can make.

Upon the best judgment that I can make of the nature of sin, and the frame of my own heart, and course of life, I know no sin lying upon me, which doth not consist with habitual repentance, and with the hatred of sin, and with an unfeigned consent that God should be my Saviour and Sanctifier, and with the loving of God above all.

The mercy of God towards me, in the prolonging of the day of grace, in the strivings of his Spirit, in his chastisements, in the checks

of conscience, in the recovery of my soul out of distempers and backslidings, doth greatly affect my heart, and strongly engage me to him; and doth often call upon my soul, and all that is within me, to bless his holy name.

Though my spiritual growth be very low and slow; yet to this present time, I have not grown worse, but better; speaking of growth in the whole space, or greater spaces of my time past, and not of every particular day.

By prayer, and endeavours long continued, I have in some measure overcome a special very sinful distemper of mind, and gained the contrary temper against a natural propensity.

Though my faith in Christ be weak, yet to have an interest in his promises, I am ready to part with all that is dear in this world, and I have no hope of happiness, but in Christ.

Though I have had doubtings touching the promised salvation, yet

I know that as to my own felicity, I prize nothing more than that salvation, being the glorifying and enjoying God for ever, and I embrace it as my best good. I love Christ, whom I have not seen; and I am affected towards him, as towards a person, who taught and did the most excellent things, and promised a most excellent state to his followers, and purchased their redemption at the dearest rate.

I am heartily grieved for loving God so little, yet I am sure, this I

wrote according to a full persuasion at that time, namely, I love nothing more than God, and in my esteem and choice, I prefer the spiritual, divine, and heavenly life, incomparably before the carnal, animal, earthly life. And this esteem and choice is made good by performance in ordinary.

I love to love God. And I desire this love not only as an evidence of my salvation, but for itself. I had much rather have a heart to love him perfectly, than to have all

the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world.

My conscience bears me witness that in the present exercise of my ministry, I have no self-end of worldly advantage, or reputation among men, or any interest of the carnal mind: but if the command of Christ, and the necessities of souls, did not oblige me to this service, I should gladly retire to privacy and solitude.

My temporal estate is mean and low, yet I am contented with it,

and humbly bless God for what I have. I live in as narrow a compass for expenses, as I can, that I might have something to give to the poor, and to be helpful to those that are in need, according to my ability. And as God hath required of us to love mercy; and our Saviour hath said, It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive; so I have more pleasure in giving a portion to the needy, as far as my mean estate will bear, than in laying out for the delight of my own

sense, or worldly conveniences. And this proceeds not from a conceit of merit in any thing that I can do, but from a love to please God, and do good.

Though I have a good knowledge about the premises, yet I am apt to waver about the conclusion. And though I apprehend the evidences of my sincerity to be clear, yet a timorousness remains in me.

Though I have not as yet overcome the fear of death, yet I am sure, that the unwillingness which

is in me to die, is not that I might enjoy the pleasures of sense, or any gratification of the animal life.

I feel in myself a burden of sin and corruption, much sensuality, earthliness, selfishness ; nevertheless I judge, there is that predominance of love to God, and holiness, which I hope is unmovably seated in my soul ; whereupon I hope that it cannot be, that I should be cast out of his blissful presence into that perdition, which is a state of immutable hatred of him. And

I apprehend, that the most horrid and hellish state of hell itself, lies in its everlasting and utmost enmity against God.

Thus I am searching and trying my heart and ways; and what I find by myself, I write down, that I may have it by me, for my relief in an evil day, and an hour of temptation. For I must expect the time, when by weakness, or anguish of body or mind, I may be disabled to recollect myself, and duly to state the case of my own

soul. And the powers of nature may so fail, that I may have but a very weak apprehension of what I have to do in this great concernment. I am warned by the parable of the ten virgins to look to it, that together with my lamp, I may have oil in my vessel, and be ready to enter in with the Bridegroom at his coming.

Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, to me one of the chief of sinners. Oh my exceeding sinfulness ! Oh the riches of thy goodness towards me ! Should not I loathe my carnal

self? Should not I grieve for grieving thy Spirit? I desire to do so, I hope to do so. Do what thou wilt with me, so thou pardon, and sanctify, and save me. I am afraid of thy judgments, I can endure but little: oh how weak is my heart! Nevertheless I will endeavour, and I trust through grace, that I shall be enabled to bear thy correcting hand. Thou art wise and holy, Thou art merciful and gracious, Thou retainest not thine anger for ever, because thou delightest in

mercy. O spare me, and consider me, and deal with me not after my sins, and reward me not after mine iniquities; but as far as the east is from the west, so far remove my transgressions from me: comfort me, and satisfy me, for I wait for relief from thee. Whatsoever befalls me, I will put my trust in thee. I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief. Lord, increase my faith. Oh my God, I lie at thy feet and mercy. I put my sinful, distressed soul into the hands of Jesus Christ, and I rest

on the covenant of grace made in him, as all my salvation, and all my desire. Amen.

MORE OBSERVATIONS TOUCHING THE
STATE OF MY SOUL. MARCH 27,
1676.

Oh the wonderful mercy of God towards me a most vile and wretched sinner, in convincing, rebuking, and awakening me unto a self-abhorrence, and an utter detestation

of my sins, my special sins ; so that I cannot be reconciled to them. Since the more powerful awakening of my conscience, I never have, and am persuaded never shall return to those former sins, which made a breach between God and my soul. I hate every sin impartially. A sinful state is, in my internal sense, a horrid and a hellish state.

I find myself firmly resolved to give up any part of my worldly estate, that I shall be found to hold to another's wrong. If it be doubt-

ful where the right lies, I am resolved first to endeavour a reference to conscientious knowing men ; and if that cannot be fitly had, to submit it to a legal trial, with a desire that right may take place. I know not that I hold any such estate, or that there is any doubt of my legal right to any thing that I possess ; but I have made supposition for the trial of my own spirit.

When I had a father or mother, I would have trusted them, to defend or deliver me from any evil,

from which it was in their power to defend or deliver me. In the same manner I now trust to my loving wife. Why then should I be suspicious of God, in whose hands I am? Why should I doubt of his dear love and tender mercy towards me, or call in question his good will to preserve or deliver me from any affliction, that would be too hard for me to bear, or to sustain, and comfort me under any suffering, which he sees fit to inflict upon me?

If when I was more careless, and

forgetful of God, and when I ventured upon breaches with him, he was pleased to convince me of my sin, and to rouse me up to a greater care, and to make me more earnest for pardon, and for healing, and for all needful grace, and more thoroughly resolved to follow him throughout; surely he will not refuse me in my addresses for more grace, and a more confirmed state of holiness. If I follow on to know the Lord, I shall know him, and see his salvation.

Though death and judgment be of dreadful consideration ; though God be holy and just, and I be vile and guilty, and worthy of eternal perdition ; yet why should I doubt of mercy and forgiveness, and of support and comfort in the darkness of death, and of justification in the day of judgment, from a merciful and faithful God, through a powerful Redeemer and Advocate ; seeing, as a humble, penitent believer, I lie at his feet, and cast myself into his arms, and wait on his grace,

and am resolved to keep his ways, and never to return to folly.

I more desire to be sincere, than to know that I am so. The comfort and delight of being and doing good, I set not so much by, as the very being and doing good. To love God, and to be conformable to him, is that which I most of all desire should be in me.

I will trust God in his ways. I will strive against an over-timorous solicitude about my own salvation, and will commit myself to God,

who is infinite goodness and love, and I will lie down, and take my repose therein.

I am grieved, when I observe or hear of the scandals of some professors, and the disorders of those that are in charity to be judged sincere, and the follies and frailties of the more sincere and upright. And it humbles me, by causing me to reflect upon myself, and my own faultiness, and weakness, and proneness to offend; and it makes me more to desire the

heavenly society, and to be among the spirits of just men made perfect.

My sins of sensuality in every kind and degree, I search out, and repent of. I am kept by grace, from gross sins of this sort. In the gratifications of sense, which are lawful in general, I scrupulously dread excess, and undueness of circumstances. How earnestly do I desire an absolute purity !

All envy, unrighteousness, uncharitableness, uncompassionateness, undutifulness, and base selfishness,

which is the root of all the evil I have seen, lamented, and abhorred. The motions and stirrings of mind, that way, are suppressed and dislodged: I will never give way thereunto.

Self-applauding, self-seeking, in matter of praise and honour before men, I strive against. I desire to be as sincere to another's reputation as to my own. I would not value others by their regard to me, but by their true worth. I would be contented to be little in the eyes of others. This I unfeignedly desire

and endeavour, and I hope, that I have it in some good degree.

All my omissions, and negligences in the work of the ministry, in preaching, in personal private application, I bewail; and heartily resolve upon more diligence and faithfulness.

Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; but remember me, and spare me according to thy great mercy in Christ Jesus, the great propitiation for sin, in whom I desire to be found, and under the

covert of whose wing I stand, that I may be saved from thy wrath, and enjoy thy peace, and live in thy presence, where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

FEB. 22, 1678-9.

God will never send any soul to hell, that hath the habitual predominant love of God, though culpably remiss, and otherwise sinful: yea, hell and such love of God are inconsistent.

I love the holy will of God with

all my heart, and hate all disconformity to it. Nothing is more grievous to me, than to displease God ; and nothing is more pleasant to me, than to please him.

I strive after christian perfection.

I labour to be lifted up from self, to die to self-advancement, to self-glorification, and to all selfish joys, and to live wholly in and to God, and to have self swallowed up in the love of him.

I labour in the work of self-resignation, that my will may be confined

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to, and included in the will of
God.

I strive after patience in its perfect work, and do find a willingness to yield to God's will in my chastisements. I still justify God, and do not entertain a hard thought of his dealing with me; but conclude, that it is altogether holy, just, and good, and for the best.

I feel my sin a greater burden to me than my affliction. I had rather have health of soul in a body full of pain, than health and ease of

body with a distempered soul. And the sense of my great sinfulness disposeth me to patience, under my afflicting infirmities of body.

I narrowly watch my heart, that it may not lodge, or admit a vain thought. When I am surprised with vanity, I suppress it as soon as I observe it.

I am very fearful of offending in a word. When on the sudden, and by incogitancy, I have spoken a word, which upon second thoughts is doubtful to me, though I had not

such doubt in the speaking of it ; I have been much perplexed about it, and engaged myself to a greater watchfulness.

AUGUST, 1680.

Surely, Christ hath my heart. Whensoever I swerve from Christ in a thought, word, or deed, it is by inadvertency and surprisal against my fixed principle ; and I have great regret at it, and loathe myself for it.

If I were out of all fear of damnation, I had rather be holy than

unholy ; and I take pains, and use God's means to be holy in opposition to the flesh, and I make it my chief care. And I do this, because I make the enjoying of God my chief good ; and rather than lose the hope thereof, I would willingly undergo the sufferings of this life, which lead to that blessed fruition, not excepting the fiery trial itself.

AUGUST, 1680.

I hope, when the end cometh, my God will say to me, Dear child,

thy warfare is accomplished, thine iniquity is pardoned, enter thou into my rest. Therefore, I will both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God. I will hope to the end. Strengthen me, O my God, that I faint not.

OCTOBER 4, 1680.

I have no design, I pursue nothing contrary to God's interest; but all my designs and pursuits are for God and holiness. I think I am sure of this, if I be sure of any thing.

My great aim, and care, and labour, is to cleanse myself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

To whom I yield myself a servant to obey, his servant I am : but I do not yield myself a servant to sin, to obey it ; but I do yield myself a servant to God, to obey him. The design and business of my life, is to do his will.

THE WORKINGS OF MY HEART
IN MY AFFLICTION.

AUGUST 5, 1680.

THE will of God in laying this affliction upon me, I unfeignedly approve as holy, just, and good. And I am unfeignedly willing to bear the affliction, as it is an evil laid upon me by his will, till the time come, in which he thinks fit to remove it. I watch, and pray, and strive, that I may not give way to a repining

thought against his holy hand. In this point the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. My mind doth really consent to God's dispensation, and to my submission, and being most agreeable to his wise and gracious government, and most conducive to my salvation. But my sensitive part, and my mind also, as it is in part unrenewed, weak, and sinful, doth greatly oppose; so that I am put hard to it, and I must say, I am willing, Lord, help my unwillingness. I have not

observed in the several days, that a thought of direct or positive discontentment, or vexatious commotion of mind, hath been admitted by me ; nevertheless, I see to my grief, that I fall exceeding short of that quietness, contentment, and cheerfulness in my condition, and of that freeness of self-resignation to God's will, that I desire, and his goodness calls for.

I wrestle with God by importunate prayer, that this thorn in the flesh might depart from me ; that

this distemper might be removed, or so mitigated, that I might be in some comfortable ease, and get a more cheerful freedom in doing my duty.

Yet I would not wrest this relief out of his hands unseasonably, and without his good will, and his blessing. I would wait his time, and desire to have it with his love and favour, and with a saving benefit. And so my earnest desire thereof, is limited with submission to his holy will. Yet I find that this submission is no easy matter, but that I must take pains

with my own heart, and that it is God, who must work my heart to it, and keep under the flesh, which is always ready to rebel. It is hard to be willing to bear my wearisome condition : and, oh how weak is my heart, and ready to sink, if it be not upheld by a strength above my own ! Oh let his grace be sufficient for me, and let his power be made perfect in my weakness.

I feel myself bettered in the inner man, by this chastening. It hath furthered mortification, and self-de-

nial, and done much to the breaking of the heart of pride, and to bring me on towards that more perfect self-examination, for which I labour. It hath much deadened the world to me, and my desire to the world. It makes me know in earnest the emptiness of all creatures, and how great my concern is in God. It drives me close to him, and makes me to fetch all my comforts from him. I see of how little value all outward contentments are; and not only in my present afflicted state,

but if I were at ease, and in full prosperity. The sense of this benefit to my soul, is the great means of bringing my will to that weak degree of submission to God's will, to which I have attained.

O that I could live more by faith in this trying affliction. I endeavour to impress upon my soul those arguments, which the scripture affords for patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. But this will not do the work, unless the Spirit of faith and patience be given from Him, from

whom comes down every good and perfect gift. I pray, I cry to my Father, that he would give me the Holy Spirit, according to his gracious promise, that I might show forth the power of his grace, and that I might not dishonour him, nor discourage his children, nor reproach religion by my weakness. And in my bearing of it well, my reputation is nothing regarded by me, in comparison with the honour of Christ. Him I desire to glorify both in my obedience and patience.

I do not love God the less,

because of his correcting hand upon me. As my necessities drive me, so his love draws me, and my love brings me to him. I look to him as my Father; and shall I not honour my Father, and give him reverence when I am chastened of him? The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. I will wait for the Lord, who hideth his face; I will look after him; he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. Therefore he will turn again, and

have compassion upon me. If he kill me, I will put my trust in him : for he will not cast me off for ever, if I cleave to him with faith unfeigned ; but even through death itself will he save me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. When I say, What shall I do, in case of such or such troublesome or dangerous consequences ? my heart answers, Be not careful, God will provide ; I will leave it to him.

Besides a natural desire of ease

and rest, the sense of the temptation to which I am liable in this condition, makes me importunate to be delivered from it. I feelingly know the weakness of my own heart, and I am not ignorant of the devil's malice and subtilty, and how he will make the fiercest assaults where I am weakest. Whereupon I tremble in myself, for fear of being tempted, and shaken, and greatly amazed. And upon this ground, respecting my soul's safety, I judge an humble and patient importunity with God for the removing

or moderating of my distemper, to be my duty. Yet to keep me from being over solicitous and anxious in this thing, I consider, that God doth govern and limit all our temptations, and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will, with the temptation, open a way for us to escape. Nevertheless, I find that I do much offend by too great a vehemence of desire to be delivered from this grievous burden, without due submission; also by too much disquietness and dejection, when

after some expectation of a benefit by that means, I perceive that my hope thereof is likely to be frustrated. The Lord help me to bear it better, and as I ought to do, and keep my mind in its right frame.

My business under this affliction is to be careful about my own part, and to leave God's part to his care. My part is to do my duty, and to get the benefit of the affliction; but to remove it, is God's part. Let me perform what belongs to me, and what belongs to God he will certainly perform in his own time and

way. The sum of my duty is, graciously to comply with the dispensation, and to behave myself suitably to it, and to please and honour God under it. Accordingly in this I labour, and in this way I seek for comfort. And first I justify God, and judge myself. God exercises his own holiness and justice in this castigation. His justice and holiness I approve, and accept the punishment of mine iniquity, and exercise a hatred of the sin for which I now smart. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned

against him, and I repent with a self-abhorrence ; and I lie in the dust at his feet, and wait on him, until that he have mercy upon me, and I am glad to receive mercy upon his terms.

I have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope that is set before me. I do most heartily take God for my portion, and I had rather live the divine life in conformity to him, and fellowship with him, here in the first-fruits of the Spirit, and hereafter in the fulness of glory, than live in the fulness of the delights and contentments, that belong to the natural life

upon earth, in a way of sin, and alienation from the life of God. I do most heartily take Christ according to the offer of the gospel, not only to be justified from my sins, and delivered from the wrath to come, by his merits; but also to be sanctified by his word and Spirit, and to be governed by his laws, and to be brought by him unto the aforesaid fellowship with God. And my life and practice in the main bent, and ordinary course thereof, is according to this choice, in a daily walking not by sight and sense, but by faith; not

after the flesh, but after the Spirit ; in setting my heart not on earthly, but on heavenly things. I cast off vain desires and hopes, and my expectations of good are from God, according to the tenor of his promises. When I walk in darkness, and see no light of outward comfort, human helps, and visible means, I will trust in the name of the Lord, and stay myself upon my God. I strive with my own spirit, to subdue it to the will of God ; and in whatsoever I am tempted to be most impatient, therein I labour most for patience. My

great care is, that I may not sin against my God in any kind; and more especially, that I may not sin by a rebellious impatience under his correcting hand. In this present distress I look upon myself, as being upon my trial; and therefore I look more diligently to my behaviour in it. Now a price is put into my hand for the proof of my sincerity, and I labour accordingly to make good proof of it. I am willing to serve God in pain and patience, else I were unworthy of so good a Master. I am willing to be conformable

to Christ in suffering, else I were unworthy of Him. But here I must say again, The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak; Lord, help my unwillingness. I am called to deny all the pleasures of sense, and to mind them no more; and I am heartily willing to do it. I am called to declare to others, by the exercise of faith and patience, the righteousness of the Lord, and his tender mercies, and great faithfulness, and that he alone is all-sufficient. O that the power of his grace may be thus magnified in me! This is the

fruit of the afflictions, that I look after ; and in this will I labour more and more. And through the help of Divine grace, I will not doubt of a good issue, while I am found in the way of duty. To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, God, who cannot lie, hath promised to give eternal life.

I am desirous to be delivered from this affliction, if it be the will of the Lord, upon this account, that I might have a more notable proof of my freer choosing of God for my portion,

when I am not thus driven to him, as now, because I can go no where else for comfort ; also of my freer turning from the world, even then when I am capable of enjoying it. To have such a proof of these things in myself, I should take for a great advantage, and be greatly thankful. Nevertheless, for the quieting of my mind, I consider that my present afflicted state doth better secure me from temptations, which might draw my heart from God to the love of the world ; in which respect, prosperity is far more dangerous than

adversity. Moreover, my present state gives me advantage for a higher proof of the grace that is in me, and of the power of Divine aid, upholding me in a life of faith and patience, by which I live upon God alone, when worldly comfort fails me, and by which I am enabled to overcome things grievous to nature; and to get above, not only the pleasures, but the sharp pains of sense; and to live and endure with little natural or bodily rest. Also, it gives me the advantage of exercising a resolved, willing self-resignation to God, in this

dispensation, which is harsh to flesh and blood; and a resting in hope, when there is no present appearance of help; and a waiting and looking for the Lord, who hides his face; and a cleaving to him by constant love, though he doth sore bruise me. If I continue in the exercise of these graces, they will give me a good proof, that the heavenly nature is in me, and will make way for great assurance towards God, and full consolation in Jesus Christ. And yet further; I trust that I have, long before this distress, chosen God for my

portion, and drawn off my heart from the flattering vanities of this world. And I know, that in this distress I do not come to him constrainedly, or merely as driven. For I delight to draw nigh to him, to pour out my heart before him in prayer and meditation. My meditation of him is sweet to my soul, and I do not love to be diverted from it. And when my distemper is in any degree more easy, it works unto a rejoicing in him. And it is for an enlargement of heart towards him, that I chiefly desire bodily ease and rest.

Hear my cry, O God ; attend unto my prayer ! I will cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed : lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.

God, the infinite goodness and love, will not cast off a poor soul that lies at his feet, and cries for the help of his grace, when it is ready to sink under the burden, and is willing to have mercy upon his terms.

Therefore, I will still cry to him, and look for him, and lean upon him, and will not depart from him by an evil heart of unbelief. This I resolve

in his strength. Lord, strengthen me unto the perfect work of patience.

Lord, I heartily consent that thou shouldest use me as thou pleasest, so thou use me as one of those that love thy name. Disposal is an effect of proprietorship, but it is always a regular and a loving disposal of the subjects of his government. O ! deal favourably with thy servant. Thou knowest my frame ; remember that I am but dust.

The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me ; Thy mercy, O Lord,

endureth for ever. Forsake not the works of thine own hands. O Lord, without thee I can do nothing. Therefore I must beg, and thou wilt give grace sufficient, without which I cannot subsist ; for therein is the life of my spirit.

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.

Pity me, O Lord, as a father pitieth his children.

Comfort me, O Lord, as one whom his mother comforteth.

The Lord will wait, that he may be gracious unto you : for the Lord

is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him.

Can I be in a better hand? As my professed judgment is concerning God's proceeding, so let me stand affected towards it.

NOTES FOR MYSELF.

KEEP thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life.

Death and life are in the power of
the tongue.

Entertain not a sensual imagination
for a moment; and give not
way to the least glance of the eye
towards vanity.

Be always expecting some trouble
or other, to interrupt thy outward
peace and rest.

Never expect any thing from the world ; and when it offers thee any thing that is good for thee, receive it ; but catch not at it greedily.

Be always mindful what thou mayest do for thine own and others' salvation, in every instant, upon every occasion.

Die daily.

In arguing with another, watch against every inordinate heat of passion, loud speaking, and every rash word.

If any neglect or slight thee, care not for it, yet observe it.

Any matter of trial to thee, reckon among thy gains.

Take no delight of sense, but in a manifest and direct subserviency to spiritual ends; and use that delight not to irritate, but to allay sensuality.

When a sensual imagination or passion breaks in, then excite a taste of the powers of the world to come; and delay not to recover the divine frame.

What thou doubttest, do not.

In thy actions, consider not only what is lawful, but what is best in the present circumstances; and do that.

In every delight of sense, watch against all brutishness.

When thou art in company, where the talk is but vain, watch to put in a word, that may be to edification.

If any despise thee, do not bear a grudge against him for it. And be not offended with any, merely because they do not honour thee.

When thou art framing excuses, take heed of speaking an untruth, or approaching near to it; lest in avoiding the offence of man, thou make too bold with God. Take heed of this also, when thou wouldst speak

this

[]

this

pleasingly, and avoid offence in speaking.

Use no recreation or delight of sense, but what thou canst at that very time desire of God, that it may be sanctified to spiritual ends.

When thou hearest that another hath spoken any thing to thy injury or disparagement, beware of a transport of anger, that thou speak not harshly or unadvisedly against him, or too passionately for self, or as too much concerned for self.

Uphold the reputation of thy colleague, or any that is joined with

thee in service, as thou wouldst thine own.

Watch against all secret pleasure, in the lessening of another for advancing thyself.

Pray heartily for the success of thy colleague and others, who perform the same service that thou art engaged in. And rejoice in whatsoever good is done by them, as in what is done by thyself, and own it before men.

Use not animosity and contention in any matter, that may be brought to a good issue in the way of peace.

Engage not hastily as a party in a

difference between others; but reserve thyself impartial, and unengaged, that thou mayst moderate between them.

While thou lamentest thy weakness in some cases, and seekest more strength, be sure to use that greater strength in all other cases, whereunto thou hast attained; and be not remiss or forgetful in any duty, that is more easy to thee: so shalt thou have comfort in thy willing mind and honest care, and do much towards the attainment of that, which thou yet wantest, and reachest after.

In the time of prayer, let no business divert thee from it, that is not of present necessity.

When thou hast an opportunity of speaking a word for the good of another's soul, defer not the doing of it till another time.

Watch against all bitter and overpassionate speeches against malignant opposers of the truth. For meekness of spirit and behaviour is more according to Christ, than wrathful zeal.

Be not transported with passion against those conformists, who are

more sober than many others, yet manifest too little compassion to their suffering brethren. For even in the regenerate, there is a remainder of the spirit of envy, partiality, and selfishness, and too much of wrath, and bitterness, and other parts of the serpentine nature, though in a mortified degree. And we are to yield grains of allowance, for the temptations of prejudice, interest, &c. to which good men, as well as others, are obnoxious.

In thy zeal against the sins of others, be mindful of thine own ex-

ceeding sinfulness : call to remembrance thy great offences, which though they be unfeignedly repented of, give thee to understand what cause thou hast to be meek, and humble, and patient towards all men.

Watch against the motions of pride and hypocrisy, in the presence of any person, whose favour and opinion thou much esteemest. What is man that thou shouldst pass to be judged by man's judgment, or seek applause from man !

Be not discomposed about some petty absurdities of behaviour, or

little indecorums, or over-sights: for so to be, is pusillanimity.

When thou hast conceived a dislike of any person, his ways, or actions, or dost ill resent his carriage towards thee; take heed thou do not take any secret pleasure in the foresight of evil coming upon him; or in hearing or observing any such folly of his, as tends to his reproach, or ruin, or notable damage.

If thou hast fore-spoken the calamity, or any evil, that in reason is likely to befall one, who doth unadvisedly manage himself, and his affairs, take

heed of wishing or willing that the evil should come to pass, lest thy judgment or foresight should seem to be disparaged ; yea, take heed of any motion rising towards such a wish or will.

My own exceeding faultiness engages me in seeing and hearing the faults and follies of others, to pity them, rather than to rejoice or glory over them ; and to cover or lessen those faults, rather than to aggravate or display them.

The mercy and forgiveness that I have found and hope for at the Lord's

hand, engages and disposes me to forgive injuries and abuses done to me.

And I should not think it much, that I, who am so sinful, should bear some contumelies, or abuses from men.

It is displeasing to me, to hear the faults of others insisted on, whether they be matters of folly and inconsiderateness, or of perverseness and malice; but especially if the matter be not evident.

I find, that petty damages and injuries are apt to be vexatious, especially in a matter the whole whereof is but little; as in a little farm or living.

Wherefore, I endeavour, that I be not surprised with a troublesome appearance, and consider the moment of a thing, how light it is.

Abhor every thought, word, and deed, which is contrary to love, and tends to the hurt of others.

The more men wrong thee, the more watchfully maintain thy love towards them.

After thy public ministrations in prayer and preaching, be not thoughtful or much concerned how men like the performance; but be concerned for this, how acceptable

it is to God, and how effectual and successful to holy and saving means.

If God single me out for special great suffering, I have no reason to judge amiss of it: for such is the state of the things in the world to come, that some individuals must of necessity suffer for the good of the people. And why not I, as well as another? God is my Owner, and he may do with me, as with any other, even as he pleaseth; and he is my Father, and he will use me well, and make me sufficient amends for all my suffering;

and I shall be no loser, but an exceeding gainer thereby in the end.

In this present state of trial, it is requisite that there be a sufficient difficulty and hardship, for all those that shall be saved, to grapple with.

For all our boasts of free-will, unless there were some heavy weights of sufferings cast by Providence into the balance, to poise against our propensities to follow lusts, and pleasures, and worldly allurements, we should never seriously set ourselves to the severe and self-denying duties, which belong to true godliness.

To avoid inconveniences to thyself, expose not any to danger, whose safety thou art bound to provide for.

In all accusations, whether public or private, when thou hast made a sufficient defence, enter not into needless matters for ostentation, or such further vindication, as is not necessary, if thou stand in a slippery place; but lie at a close guard, lest thou be entangled, or in some point circumvented.

I will never wittingly and wilfully do amiss, by commission or omission, in a greater or lesser matter, because

I shall too often do amiss, at least in smaller matters, through ignorance, or inadvertency, or surprisal of passion, do what I can.

Watch every opportunity to put in a savoury word, for the good of a soul, with whom thou hast occasion of converse.

Remember thou hast nothing of thine own, but all is the Lord's; and accordingly use all that thou hast to no carnal interest, but to serve him, as being wholly devoted to him.

Be as serious and hearty in thy

prayers to God for the concerns of others, as for thine own.

Watch against selfishness, lest it work unto great uncharitableness.

When thou hast evidences of thy sincerity, which cannot in reason be gainsaid, hold to them, and take comfort in them: yet still endeavour by reviews, and further searchings, to clear it more and more.

We keep our evidences, by keeping our graces in their lively exercise.

Fetch thy comforts from heaven, and not from pleasures or hopes here below.

Do not overvalue any worth that is in thyself; but think it rather less than more, than it is indeed.

If any slight thee, be neither dejected nor provoked.

Do not value men according to their esteem of thee, but according to their true worth.

Watch against the expectation of hearing thine own praise; and when such a thought arises, instantly suppress it.

When thou art commended, let not thy thoughts dwell on it with delight; but let it be to thee as nothing.

Take heed of too great a valuation of thine own work, or usefulness in thy place ; and lay not too great a stress thereon.

When friends out of love overvalue thee, it concerns thee not to overvalue thyself, nor to take more than thy due, though they give it.

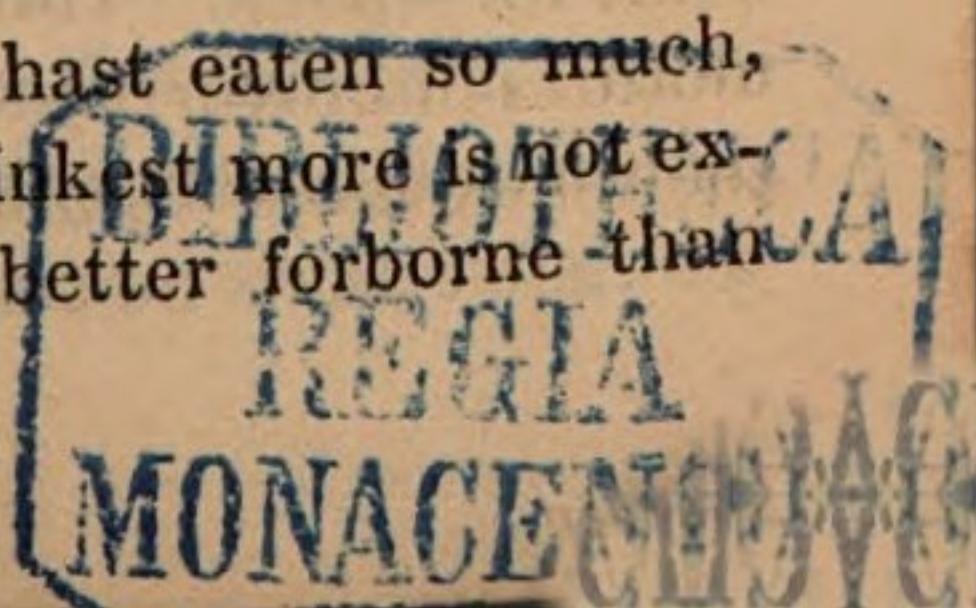
Have a habit of compassion towards the afflicted firmly fixed in thee, that the motions thereof may be suitably stirred up on every occasion.

Let an abhorrence of any content in another's sufferings, be deeply imprinted on thee ; that every thought

thereof may be prevented, or instantly suppressed: yea, hate all disregard to another's misery.

Watch against all eagerness and immoderate delight in eating and drinking; and against minding any kind of food, for the pleasing of the sense. Come to thy meals not like a brute, but as becomes a saint. Never terminate in the sensitive pleasure, but make use of it to raise thy heart to God.

When thou hast eaten so much, as that thou thinkest more is not expedient, or is better forborne than



taken, proceed not a bit more, lest thou be entangled or disturbed.

Still consider, Is this act I go about, agreeable to one that hath communion with God? will this act promote communion with God? Do I come to this act, so as to have communion with God thereby promoted.

Seek the lawful contentment of any that are about thee, as thou dost thy own; and be as glad to gratify them as thyself, so far as it is convenient for them. Hate and shun all motions of unworthy selfishness: and see that others be sharers with thee

in thy pleasant things, and be not content to have them to thyself alone.

Be not over-solicitous for humouring thyself in sensitive enjoyments, but rather suspicious of it, and be abstemious from it.

Always mind and do the present duty. Comply with the present dispensation, and make the most of it. Thy business is to please God, and God will provide for thy comfort.

Lay thy heart to rest in the will of God, for there is no other rest for the soul to be thought on.

I will not indent with God for any

good, but what is included in the covenant of grace. I will expect no good but according to the tenor of that covenant, which is all my salvation and all my desire.

I am resolved that pride shall not set me to study, or preach, or pray, or carry me on in any service. If thoughts of men-pleasing, or man's applause, steal in with my honest intentions, I will instantly cast them out, as soon as they be discovered, and I will watch and pray for the preventing of them. I will watch, when I go forth in my service for God, that

pride do not send me forth : men's opinion of me shall be nothing with me ; but the pleasing of God, and the doing of good, shall be my whole scope.

In performing prayer, I am intent upon God, and his hearing and observing my thoughts and words ; and I earnestly purpose and strive against thoughts about men's observing and judging of my performance. Nevertheless, I do find, that together with my sincere and earnest intention directed to God, thoughts of regard to men's esteem and judging, will too often thrust in, do what I can, so as

either to be pleased, or troubled, as I think they judge. These thoughts have greatly troubled my spirit. Hereupon I consider, that a due regard to expressions for men's sake, that they be affecting and not offensive, is not faulty but necessary; and therefore must be heeded. And I think, that my thoughts about men's judging have this intention at last chiefly, that my expressions be affecting, and not offensive; yet I am jealous of the mixture of corruption and vanity. I earnestly endeavour to have my heart so filled with the ap-

prehension of God's infinite Majesty, and my infinite concernment in him, that all impertinent thoughts may be quite swallowed up. All designing and endeavouring to please men for my own praise, I do at that very time detest and abandon; yea, at that very time I am sure, I do very little regard either the approbation and praise, or the disallowance and dispraise of those very persons, about whom my thoughts are apt to run out, as aforesaid. I do my uttermost to prevent, restrain, and suppress all such thoughts; they are a burden to me.

There is scarcely any thing that stirs within me, which hath less of my will, than these thoughts have. There is scarcely any thing, against which I do more watch, and pray, and strive, than against these thoughts. And whatsoever tincture of vanity and corruption be found in them, I am heartily sorry for it, I hate and loathe it; and I hope that the merciful God will not impute it to me, to the rejecting of my prayer, or to any breach between him and me.

I find that my very fear of this evil, and desire to avoid it, doth draw

my thoughts to it, as a man's great desire to sleep, and his fear that he shall not sleep, doth commonly keep him waking.

These thoughts I abhor, not only before and after, but in the very time they come in. And I strive with might and main against them. If God approve my service, and own me in it, I shall be abundantly satisfied; though men (whatsoever or how many soever they be) should despise and loathe it. On the contrary, if men should ever so highly approve it, I can never be satisfied if God do not accept and bless

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it. This I am sure of, if I be sure of any thing.

I discern, that by care I have brought it to that pass, that my thoughts of others present with me in prayer, are not with regard to their praise, which I value not, but to what is fit to be done by me in that service, and to their being affected with it.

I find I am prone to be anxiously scrupulous: yet I should consider that there be inevitable weaknesses (as impertinent thoughts) accompanying the best performances.

JOHN CHILDS AND SON, BUNGAY.



Corbet, John

Self-employment in secret

London [1824]

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